E/CN.4/1993/120

Readex
Fiche

(224)

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1993/120
22 April 1993

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 24

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Letter dated 11 March 1993 from the Transitional Government of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

On 8 March 1993, the representative of the African Association of Education and Development, in his intervention under item 24 of the agenda, made baseless allegations against my country. I must admit that I am grateful to him for having spoken as he did because it offers my country the opportunity to state briefly, by way of setting the record straight, what the facts of the matters are.

As the facts contained in the enclosed statement vividly demonstrate, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia has done everything within its power to reintegrate the ex-servicemen into the community and to look after the well-being of their families and children by taking all necessary legal and social measures both at national and local levels. It also acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in May 1991 and has undertaken since then concrete steps that would assist and facilitate the implementation of the Convention.

I would kindly therefore request Your Excellency to have your office circulate the enclosed statement as an official document of the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 24.

(Signed): Mulugeta Zewdie Michael
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

GE.93-12951 [E]

Statement issued in connection with the intervention made by the representative of the African Asscciation of Education and Development under item 24 of the Commission's agenda

1. It is regrettable, to say the least, that the representative of the African Association of Education and Development, by totally disregarding the prevailing reality that vividly demonstrates the concrete and substantial improvements made in the area of human rights and to which the present Government, as witnessed by this session itself, is repeatedly commended by concerned States and non-governmental organizations, prefers to echo unfounded allegations against Ethiopia. It is indeed regrettable to base his accusations on biased reports of some irresponsible political groups without taking the trouble to verify the facts.

2. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia is therefore compelled to state the following facts with the view to providing the correct information on the matters referred to in the said intervention of the representative of the African Association of Education and Development.

(a) The Transitional Government of Ethiopia, being motivated by the need to alleviate the problems of their families in particular their children, took a swift and appropriate decision to provide pension benefits to former members of the Derg Armed Forces below the rank of General. This decision is being fully implemented. Furthermore, the Commission for the Rehabilitation of Ex-Servicemen and Disabled War Veterans, which was set up to help former soldiers and disabled war veterans, has taken a number of measures aimed at assisting them to become self-reliant and productive citizens.

(b) All employees affected by the ongoing structural adjustment programme are either pensioned in accordance with the law or reassigned. This measure also takes care of the needs of their children and families as well.

(c) Any Ethiopian who is unfairly and illegally dismissed from his post is fully entitled to compensation on the basis of the country's existing law on compensation. In addition, the new labour code, which was issued on 20 January 1993, does not only guarantee fully the rights of all employees but it is also a total overhaul of the old labour law.

(d) What some detractors of the achievements of the Ethiopian peoples in all areas of national life since May 1991 call ethnic-based politics is the genuine exercise of the rights of the Ethiopian peoples to organize. It is democracy in action for the first time in the country's long history. The right to freedom of association is one of the fundamental rights enshrined under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The change in Ethiopia, in fact, has earned international acclaim.

(e) In the past, the needs of children and their families were not only totally ignored by the defunct regime but there was no law or policy that offered a minimum degree of protection to children. There was no law that provided protection against child labour exploitation, and no policy to help them in the fields of education, health and family care. It was, in fact, quite the contrary. The children were victims of the war-monger policy of the old regime which forced them to be recruited into the army to fight in senseless civil wars.

(f) The Transitional Government firmly believes that children should be given priority and recognizes that they should enjoy rights to special protection in accordance with their evolving physical and mental development.

(g) Ethiopia has been a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since May 1991. In accordance with article 42 of the Convention, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia has provided every assistance to the children, youth and family welfare organization in its task of translating the Convention into one of the main languages of the country. This is one of the means to widely disseminate the objectives of the Convention and increase the awareness of its provisions that guaranteed the rights of the child. This effort will continue until the Convention is translated into all the remaining languages of the country.

(h) Ethiopia derives special pleasure from being a State party to this important Convention. Its present policy towards the well-being of its children is, inter alia, based on those universally accepted human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Programme of Action, presented during the Organization of African Unity International Conference on Assistance to African Children, held in Dakar last November, vividly demonstrates the enormous efforts being exerted by the present Government in order to improve the conditions of children in the country.

3. The Transitional Government, as it did in the past, will continue to take all necessary measures with the view to further ameliorating the conditions of Ethiopia's children by taking into account their best interests. It is at present engaged in an enormous task of improving the human rights situation in the country. What it is endeavouring to bring about is a new democratic society in which human rights and fundamental freedoms would be fully protected and ensured. In spite of baseless and malicious campaigns of propaganda by anti-peace and stability forces, the Government has the tested will and determination to achieve that just and noble end.